



# BEST PRACTICES FOR ATHLETE INTERACTIONS



These athlete protection guidelines describe best practices on how Persons in Authority can maintain a safe sport environment for athletes.

## **Best Practices for Athlete Interactions**

The goal of these guidelines is to ensure all interactions and communications are open, observable, and justifiable. Its purpose is to protect participants (especially minors) and coaches in potentially vulnerable situations by ensuring more than one adult is present. There may be exceptions for emergency situations.

## **Communications**

Ottawa Elite and Ottawa Elite Prep strongly recommend the following communication guidelines for all Persons in Authority who interact with athletes:

- a)** Group messages, group emails or team pages should be used as the regular method of communication between Persons in Authority and athletes.
- b)** Persons in Authority should send personal texts, direct messages on social media, or emails to individual athletes only when necessary and only for the purpose of communicating information related to team issues and activities (i.e., non-personal information).
- c)** Parents and guardians have the right to request that their child not be contacted by Persons in Authority using any form of electronic communication and/or to request that certain information about their child may not be distributed in any form of electronic communication.
- d)** The content of all electronic communication between Persons in Authority and athletes should be professional in tone and for the purpose of communicating information related to team issues or activities.
- e)** All communication between Persons in Authority and athletes should be between the hours of 6:00am and midnight unless extenuating circumstances exist.
- f)** No communication concerning drugs or alcohol use (unless regarding its prohibition) is permitted.
- g)** No sexually explicit language or imagery or sexually oriented conversation is permitted. **h)** Persons in Authority are not permitted to ask athletes to keep a secret for them.
- h)** A Person in Authority should not become overly involved in an athlete's personal life.

## **Travel**

Ottawa Elite and Ottawa Elite Prep strongly recommend the following travel guidelines for all Persons in Authority who travel with athletes:

- a)** A Person in Authority should not be alone in a car with an athlete unless the Person in Authority is the athlete's parent or guardian.
- b)** A Person in Authority must not share a room or be alone in a hotel room with an athlete unless the Person in Authority is the athlete's parent or guardian.
- c)** Room or bed checks during overnight stays should be done by two Persons in Authority.
- d)** For overnight travel when athletes share a hotel room, roommates should be age- appropriate (i.e., within two (2) years of age) and room assignments must be respectful of athletes' safety, individual requirements and rights.

## **Locker Room / Changing Area / Meeting Room**

Ottawa Elite and Ottawa Elite Prep strongly recommend the following guidelines for the locker room, changing area, and meeting rooms:

- a)** Interactions between a Person in Authority and an individual athlete should not occur in any room where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy such as the locker room, washroom, or changing area. A second Person in Authority should be present for any necessary interaction in any such room.
- b)** If Persons in Authority are not present in the locker room or changing area, or if they are not permitted to be present, they should still be available outside the locker room or changing area and be able to enter the room or area if required in case of an emergency.

## **Photography / Video**

Ottawa Elite and Ottawa Elite Prep strongly recommend the following photography / video guidelines:

- a)** Photographs and video should be taken only in public view, observe generally accepted standards of decency, and be both appropriate for and in the best interest of the athlete.
- b)** The use of recording devices of any kind in rooms where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy is prohibited.
- c)** Examples of photos that should be edited or deleted include:
  - Physical Contact Images with misplaced apparel or where undergarments are showing
  - Suggestive or provocative poses

Ottawa Elite and Ottawa Elite Prep understand that some physical contact between Persons in Authority and athletes may be necessary for various reasons including, but not limited to, teaching a skill or tending to an injury. Ottawa Elite and Ottawa Elite Prep strongly recommend the following touch guidelines:

- a)** Unless it is not possible because of serious injury or other circumstance, a Person in Authority should always clarify with an athlete where and why any touch will occur. The Person in Authority must make clear that he or she is requesting to touch the athlete and not requiring the physical contact.
- b)** Infrequent, non-intentional physical contact, particularly contact that arises out of an error or a misjudgment on the part of the athlete during a training session, is permitted.
- c)** Making amends, such as an apology or explanation, is encouraged to further help educate athletes on the difference between appropriate and inappropriate contact.
- d)** Hugging, cuddling, physical horseplay, and physical contact initiated by the Person in Authority should not occur. Ottawa Elite and Ottawa Elite Prep is aware that athletes may initiate hugging or other physical contact with a Person in Authority for various reasons (e.g., such as celebrating after a successful performance or crying after a poor performance) but this physical contact should always be limited.

Ottawa Elite and Ottawa Elite Prep strongly recommend the following additional guidelines:

- a)** A Person in Authority should never be alone with an athlete prior to or following a competition or practice unless the Person in Authority is the athlete's parent or guardian. If the athlete is the first athlete to arrive, the athlete's parent should remain until another athlete or Person in Authority arrives. Similarly, if an athlete would potentially be alone with a Person in Authority following a competition or practice, the Person in Authority should ask another Person in Authority (or a parent or guardian of another athlete) to stay until all the athletes have been picked up. If an adult is not available, then another athlete should be present in order to avoid the Person in Authority being alone with a single athlete.
- b)** Persons in Authority giving instructions, demonstrating skills, or facilitating drills or lessons to an individual athlete should always be doing so within earshot and eyesight of another Person in Authority.